

InTouch

Summer 2025



The magazine of
Fleet United Reformed Church



FLEET UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

Kings Road, Fleet, Hampshire, GU51 3AF

tel: 01252 623629 (ansaphone)

email: secretaryfleeturc@outlook.com

web: www.fleet.urc.org.uk



www.facebook.com/fleeturc



CHURCH CONTACTS

<i>Minister:</i>	Revd Helen Everard , 07716 647288 helen.everard158@gmail.com
<i>Secretary:</i>	Margaret Armes , 01252 650994 b.ames@live.com
<i>Treasurer:</i>	John Gibbons , 07900 908990 jmgibbons@hotmail.com
<i>Hall Bookings:</i>	Margaret Armes , 01252 650994 b.ames@live.com
<i>Safeguarding Coordinators:</i>	Grace Bagshaw or Moray Henderson safeguardingfleeturc@outlook.com

WEEKLY WORSHIP

Sundays, 10 am: Family Worship

Holy Communion usually on first Sunday of month

An afternoon service is held at 2 pm on the last Tuesday of the month

REGULAR ACTIVITIES

<i>'Footsteps' Young People's Group:</i>	Sundays, 10 am (<i>term time only</i>)
<i>Pilates</i>	Mondays, 12.15-1.15 pm
<i>Coffee Morning:</i>	Wednesdays, 10–11.30 am
<i>Toddlers Group:</i>	Fridays, 10 am
<i>Bible Study:</i>	Please contact the Church Secretary for details of current meetings.

Under the umbrella of the United Reformed Church, *Guide*, *Brownie* and *Rainbow Units* meet each week during school term.

Up to date details of all the above activities are available from the Church Office, from the Church Secretary, or on our website.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR MINISTER



Dear Friends,

It has been a joyful springtime with so much sunshine, reminding us that new life bursts into being in spring as we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. It was a joy to receive three new members at our service on Easter Sunday, as well as to come together in worship early on Easter morning at Tweseldown to celebrate 'Sonrise' with friends from churches across Fleet and Church Crookham .

We hosted a lovely Family Fun morning in the Easter holiday, where children had the opportunity to learn about Jesus' journey from Palm Sunday to Easter Day. The children helped to make displays which I put in the church to remind us of the events of Holy Week. One of the mums who came thanked me for giving her some ideas to use in her own church. It is a blessing to share the gospel in this way!

At our Elders' awayday in March we talked about the ways in which we support each other as a church family. Each Elder has a group of church members to pray for and to keep in touch with. We hope that we might meet in these small groups to get to know one another, encouraging each other as we all progress along our journey with Jesus.

Recently we had another amazing curry evening, and thanks to Saju Mathew, Mary and the team we raised a record-breaking amount to support nurse training in Palani. (See page 12.)

We are reminded that we are part of the family of the church around the world. We have been invited to celebrate with our Roman Catholic friends on the weekend of 4—6 July (more details on page 7).

Have a lovely summer!

Helen



CHRISTIANS TOGETHER—JOINT SERVICE

There will be a joint service on **Pentecost Sunday, 8th June, at 6.30 pm at the Church on the Heath.**

The service will be a celebration and thanksgiving for 25 years since the Church on the Heath was founded. All are invited to attend. If you need transport, please speak to Helen.

We are also hoping to build on the success of our ecumenical Lent groups by holding prayer meetings every day between Ascension and Pentecost, at churches across Fleet and Church Crookham. So watch out for more publicity!

OUR CHURCH LIFE IN PHOTOS

(Right) There was plenty of fun and prizes to be had at our recent Beetle Drive. Thank you to Carol Rayner for organising the evening and congratulations to all the winners—and losers!



(Left) We were delighted to welcome three of our congregation into membership on Easter Day. Warm greetings to Angela Murray and to Blodwen and Colin Thomas, pictured here with our Minister.



CRONDALL OPEN GARDENS

Sunday, 8th June, 2—6 pm

£10 per person (children under 16 free)

14 Gardens + Classic Car Display

Charity Plant Sale

Refreshments & Cake



**Phyllis
Tuckwell
Hospice**

Tickets available from the Village Shop,
Phyllis Tuckwell Website, or
contact Amy Webb—07426 355584
webbamy40@gmail.com

Visit <https://www.pth.org.uk/open-gardens/> to download a
brochure of all gardens open for Phyllis Tuckwell this summer

SUMMER FAMILY FUN MORNINGS

Fridays, 1st, 22nd & 29th August, 10—11.30 am

For children 0-11,
accompanied by
an adult



A morning of fun,
with games, toys,
songs and craft

All offers of help welcome: please let Helen know



NOTICE BOARD

Contributions for the Autumn issue
of *In Touch* (September—
November 2025)
should be with Christine Gibbons,
by **11th August**. Thank you.
(christine.gibbons@beech-ride.co.uk)



BIBLE STUDY DATES

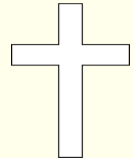
The next Bible Study is
Thursday, 5th June at 2 pm
(Please note change of day.)
Everyone welcome!

TUESDAY AFTERNOON SERVICES

Our next afternoon services will be
at 2 pm on:

**27th May, 24th June,
& 22nd July**

Please note that there
will be **no** afternoon
service in August.



BARN DANCE

Saturday, 21st June at 7 pm

With caller and music by
'Six Beats in a Bar'

Tickets: £15 a head (children £5),
which includes a hot supper and drinks.

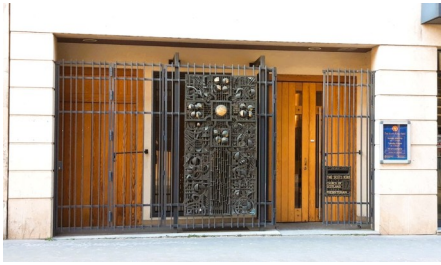
All proceeds to church funds.

Tickets from Bee Griffiths (01252 660599)



THE SCOTS KIRK, PARIS

Did you know that right in the centre of Paris there is the only Church of Scotland congregation in France? It is an English language Protestant Church which welcomes all and aims to serve the needs of people of different nationalities and denominations who live throughout the Paris region, as well as visitors to that beautiful city.



The original building on the site, 17 Rue Baynard, 75008, Paris, was built in 1885, and has attracted some famous people who have worshipped there, including American President Woodrow Wilson, British Prime Minister David Lloyd George, and Eric Liddell, the famous Scottish Olympic athlete who preferred to preach in the Scots

Kirk rather than race on a Sunday in the 1924 Paris Games. This experience was recounted in the film 'Chariots of Fire'.

In 1940, following the German occupation of Paris, the then Minister Donald Caskie moved to Marseille, where he held services in the Seamen's Mission and became a member of the French Resistance. Betrayed, arrested and sentenced to death by the Gestapo, his life was saved by a German Pastor. After the war he returned to Paris to continue his Ministry. His fascinating story is told in the book 'The Tartan Pimpernel'.

The Kirk is still on the original site, but because the old church had serious structural problems, in 1995 the Church of Scotland decided to 'sell' the site to a developer with permission to construct private apartments, in return for demolishing the old church and providing an empty shell on ground/basement level for a new church. This was achieved, and the church re-opened in 2002 with a beautiful new worship space.



If ever you are in Paris, I encourage you to visit the Scots Kirk. Services are held at 11 am each Sunday, and visitors are given a warm and friendly welcome, as we were when we attended a service recently.

Sandra Smith

*[Grateful thanks to the Scots Kirk for permission to use the photographs:
<http://www.scotskirkparis.com/>]*



WORLD DAY OF PRAYER

The services for the World Day of Prayer 2025 were composed by the women of the Cook Islands, with the message, '*I made you wonderful*', and were held on Friday 7th March at All Saints Church, Fleet, for the morning service, and at Christ Church, Crookham, for the evening service.

Both services encouraged us all to:

- Be enriched by the faith of Christians of other cultures;
- Share the burdens of other people, and pray for them;
- Become aware of the whole world, and no longer live in isolation.



Refreshments were served with Cook Island Lime Cookies, and the cast dressed up in flowers and bright clothes, which added colour to the service.

Next year the service will be prepared by the women of Nigeria on the theme '*I will give you rest. Come.*'

We hope to see you there.

Darrell Henderson

CELEBRATE WITH HOLY TRINITY CHURCH



*Bowenhurst Road,
Church Crookham, GY52 8JU*

Holy Trinity Church are celebrating the Golden Jubilee of their Consecration, and all friends are invited to join them:



Friday, 4th July at 7 pm— Ecumenical Taizé Service

Saturday, 5th July at 12 noon—Jubilee Mass, followed by lunch

Sunday, 6th July at 11 am—Mass with musicians

There will also be a Flower Festival at the Church all weekend

'LE WEEKEND' 2025— FUN, FOOD AND FELLOWSHIP IN FRANCE

On Friday 2nd May ten people from Wessex left Newhaven for Dieppe, and travelled on to Luneray in Normandy to take part in the first Le Weekend in France since 2018. Most of those ten were first time participants: some were fluent in French, but for others it was their first time abroad.

We were warmly welcomed at the United Protestant Church of France in Luneray, where we greeted old friends and met new ones. We had tea and cake and met our hosts for the weekend; then we went our separate ways for an evening with our host families.

Alex and I stayed with our old friends Sophie and Francois Verhoeven, who have been involved with Le Weekend since 2010. We enjoyed a relaxing evening with them, with great discussions around the table.

On Saturday morning about thirty of us gathered around a table to discuss our chosen theme, 'The Creative Word'. We were joined by church members from Rouen and others from Luneray, as well as by our Moderator, Revd Dr Michael Hopkins and his daughter, who had crossed overnight. Michael had prepared some questions to start us off, first considering the Creative Word in Genesis and then, after a break, God's Living Word in Jesus. The discussion was translated so that everyone could understand.

Sophie had organised the church members to provide hospitality and food for all throughout the weekend. We had lunch, then set off for a tour of a local chateau, Chateau Bosmelet, which has a history dating back to the 13th century, including being used as a V1 and V2 base during World War II. The Resistance found out, smuggled out the details, and the site was bombed extensively by the RAF.

The present owner, Alain Germain, a noted theatre costume designer of the '70s and '80s, bought and restored the chateau, and now he holds exhibitions of his and others' works of art and design. We returned to Luneray and enjoyed singing together in French and English until it was time for dinner, accompanied by good wine.

On Sunday we wandered round the Luneray market before the church service, which was led by Pr Charles Klagba. Michael Hopkins assisted with communion. Charles shared an encouraging message, that the Risen Jesus comes to us even if we have got lost in the past, and calls us to follow Him with love.



*The whole group outside
the Chateau Bosmelet*

A jazz band played during the service and afterwards, as we enjoyed drinks with the church community before lunch. There was plenty of food for everyone, and then it was time to say our goodbyes and set off back to Dieppe for our ferry home.

This was a really encouraging weekend. After Brexit and Covid, Sophie in France and I in England had some struggles as we tried to arrange Le Weekend. But I am sure that the Living Word was shared amongst us in both languages, assuring us that the Risen Christ meets us at Le Weekend, and that the love of God is present with us all, no matter what language we speak.

If you would like to be involved in the 2026 Le Weekend in Wessex, please get in touch with me, Helen Everard, on helen.everard158@gmail.com. We are looking for a church to host the group!

Helen



*The Moderator, the
Revd Dr Michael Hopkins,
in the church at Luneray*



ON THE ELECTION OF POPE LEO XIV

The Revd Timothy Meadows, Moderator of the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church, has offered Pope Leo XIV greetings and prayers from the URC after his election as Supreme Pontiff of the Catholic Church:

'On behalf of the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church, I extend our warmest greetings to His Holiness Pope Leo XIV, and assure His Holiness, along with our Catholic sisters and brothers, of our continued prayers and support at this significant juncture in the life of the Church world-wide.'



The URC also offered this prayer on the election of Pope Leo XIV:

Eternal One,
whose limitless love reaches all humanity,
bless Pope Leo in his new role,
grant him wisdom and patience as he takes up the heavy burden of office,
strengthen him in his ministry of encouragement and oversight,
that we may all be Jesus' disciples in a world desperately needing Your light,
and signs of hope that evil will not have the last word. *Amen*

[Image: Frayjhonattan/Wikimedia, CC BY-SA 4.0]

MAKE DO AND MEND

As I write this article, Britain has been remembering VE Day, or Victory in Europe Day. May the 8th marks 80 years since the end of war in Europe. One of the great wartime maxims was 'Make Do and Mend' as resources were so scarce. These days, we have become a more throw-away society with cheap goods and cheap fashion meaning that items don't last as long, but as they're so cheap it doesn't matter... does it?

Unfortunately, our world has finite resources and whilst we are able to recycle many materials and grow others, there is still a limit to what the world can provide us with. Since the 1970s the world's population has increased by 120%, but the world is unable to increase the rate at which it provides for us. This has led scientists to describe what they call 'Earth Overshoot Day'. This is computed by dividing the planet's biocapacity (the amount of ecological resources Earth is able to generate that year), by humanity's Ecological Footprint (humanity's demand for that year), and multiplying by 365, the number of days in a year. 1971 saw humanity using a year's worth of Earth's resources by Christmas Day, but by 2024, we had used a year's worth of Earth's resources by August 1st. That is quite a sobering statistic. See overshootday.org for more information.



I fear that cheap brands like Temu and Shein, or even some high street brands, which flood the market with poor quality products tempt the general public to spend unwisely. Where we can, we should avoid this and buy quality products that will last.



Programmes like 'The Repair Shop' showcase the skills of artisans who can breathe new life into treasured objects in the spirit of Make Do and Mend, but did you know that Fleet offers its very own Repair Café? Fleet Repair Café aims to divert waste from landfill; save carbon emissions produced by reduced landfilling and recycling; educate local people on where best to take unfixable items; provide a space where local crafts people are valued for their skills, and save customers money! Fleet Repair Café takes place on the first Saturday of every month in the Harlington Centre, Fleet Road. Repairs are free, but there are donation buckets for those who are able to and would like to donate money to help cover running costs. April's statistics show a 69.8% success rate, saving an estimated £1,460.00 for the general public, with 66kg of waste avoided using 91 volunteer hours. More information can be found on their Facebook page.

Why not take along an item in need of some TLC and see if they can help? They do not look at white goods, petrol items or mobile phones but will look at electrical items, electronic items, mechanical items, IT fixes, textiles, garden tools and sharpening and bikes. I'm sure they would appreciate skilled volunteers too, if you have some time to spare once a month! Let's hope that the spirit of 'Make Do and Mend' lives on.

Grace Bagshaw

[Planet Earth image by [Raquel Candia](#) from [Pixabay](#)]



COMMITMENT FOR LIFE (C4L)

I would like to thank all at Fleet URC for the kind and generous donations you have been putting in my little money pot on Sundays. They recently totalled £90, which is amazing.

We also had a thank you certificate from C4L, and a letter in which Patrick Watt, Chief Executive Officer, wrote:

'Thank you so much for all your dedicated support for C4L. Ongoing partnerships like C4L deepen our relationships with those across the world and challenge us to keep JUSTICE and PEACE at the centre of our Christian life. Together we are part of the transformation of God's kingdom and seeing change happen.'

Thank you again.

Darrell Henderson, C4L Representative



Please Note: Fleet URC has a new email address for safeguarding. If you have any safeguarding concerns you can contact Grace Bagshaw (Church Safeguarding Coordinator) or Moray Henderson (Deputy CSC) on safeguardingfleeturc@outlook.com.



PALANI MISSION PARTNERSHIP

Our journey with Palani Mission started in early 2016 when Mary Mathew told our church meeting about the work of her sister, Sheeba and her husband, Revd John Abraham at the mission in Tamil Nadu

Province. As a result, our church set up the Friends of Palani group to discuss ways to fundraise and Ruth Dillon, our then minister, made plans to visit India to oversee any project work.

Ruth travelled with Bee and Gordon Griffiths to India and set up a goat husbandry project, clothing and accessory manufacturing facility, recruited two local girls for midwifery training, and established a link with a Catholic nunnery that cared for disabled and disadvantage people of all ages. Our partnership was thus forged and continues to thrive.

The initial work has been expanded to include construction of a well at the Mission Church for clean drinking water for all, to build sturdy houses, and to hold medical camps at regular intervals where the poor can access free healthcare. To date, we have raised more than £30,000 of assistance, the mainstays being Saju's charity curry nights, along with donations from individuals and local organisations.



Worship at Palani Mission



Visiting the sick at home

Our most recent curry night was supported by over 75 people, who gave generously for the meal and bought raffle tickets to raise a combined total of £2,400. This represents the most raised at a single event so far, and will fund two years' training of a community nurse, three more houses/village churches, and several medical camps. We were blessed by having Deepa and John join us on the evening. Deepa is the daughter of Revd John and Sheeba, who sent the following message:

'Thank you very much for all the support given by you over the last years. We are so grateful for your generosity. May God richly bless your church in Fleet and you all. You are always in our prayers.'

John Gibbons

*[Please visit our website for photos recently received from Revd John:
<https://fleet.urb.org.uk/palani-mission-news-updates/>]*

GRATITUDE IN ACTION: A HEARTFELT THANK YOU FROM HART FOOD BANK



'For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat...' - Matthew 25:35

As we reflect on the past few months at Hart Foodbank, one word continues to come to mind: Gratitude.

Thanks to the incredible support of the congregation of Fleet URC and the wider community, we've been able to meet growing needs with compassion, dignity, and hope. Your generous food donations, financial gifts, and time have made a real, tangible difference in the lives of individuals and families facing crisis across Fleet, Hook, Odiham and beyond.

This past year has not been without its challenges. The rising cost of living continues to impact many, pushing more people to turn to us for help. Yet through it all, **your faith in action** has shone brightly, whether through regular food contributions, volunteering, or simply spreading the word about our work.

We are especially thankful for:

- **Church collections and harvest gifts** that help us restock vital items.
- **Prayerful support** that uplifts both our volunteers and the people we serve.
- **Volunteers from the congregation**, giving time and kindness each week.
- **Community partnerships** formed through shared mission and ministry.

Together, you've helped provide not only emergency food, but also **hope, dignity, and connection**. And as we expand with initiatives like the **Hart Community Mobile Pantry Van**, your ongoing support remains the foundation of what we do.

With heartfelt thanks,

The Hart Foodbank Team

Stay Connected with Us!

Follow, like and share us on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and X to stay updated on our latest news, events, and community efforts.

Join the conversation and be part of our growing online community!

Your support helps us spread the word and make an even bigger impact.

<https://hart.foodbank.org.uk/>

STAND BY ME

With impeccable timing we have heard from all of our Stand by Me children in the last fortnight!

Laurith in Colombia messaged to let us know her news and how she had spent her money at Christmas:



Dear Fleet United Reformed Church,

I hope you are all doing well. I'm doing fine, thank God.



Laurith

I'm preparing a chemical presentation about mass, weight and volume. I'll be presenting it with a model I've already made, but I still need to study more to be ready, when presenting.

How are all of you doing?

I would like to thank you for the Christmas gift. With it, I was able to get a pencil case, some hair clips, a bow and some earrings. I'm really happy with the gift—I liked it a lot.

May God bless you greatly.

With love, Laurith

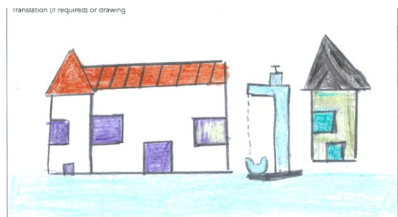
We will have to find out later how well Laurith's presentation went!

Meanwhile, Arsema in Ethiopia wrote to tell us about how she had received her birthday money, and to show us her new dress, purchased with the gift we sent her at Christmas:

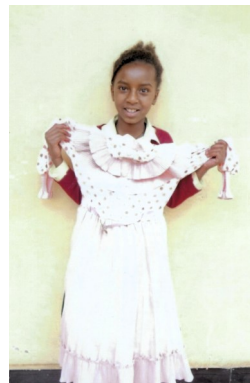
Dear Fleet United Reformed Church

I hope you are fine, I am good. Today I received monetary treat from you. It creates a special feeling for me. Thank you very much to the monetary treat for Christmas. It is very kind of you. You make me able to have new clothes.

Much love from Arsema



Arsema has also drawn a picture of Bethany School (*left*), with its very important water pump, which was supplied by *Stand by Me*.



Arsema

And finally, Pau has written from Myanmar:

Dear all of my friends from Fleet URC,

*I am very thankful for sending me this birthday cards.
I love you all. I pray for you. You also pray for me please.*

With love, Pau

We are particularly pleased to hear from Pau as we were all concerned for his wellbeing following the devastating earthquake at the end of March and, as communication with Myanmar is somewhat difficult at the best of times, we didn't know if our birthday greetings would reach him either.

Stand by Me reports that thankfully all their children and staff in various locations in Myanmar are safe, and all their buildings were undamaged, but may we continue to pray for those families who were not so fortunate and for the wider community as it recovers and rebuilds. *Stand by Me* has set up a dedicated appeal to support the relief team they managed to deploy to the area—please visit <https://www.standby.me/appeals/earthquake> if you are able to donate. We also encourage you to watch the powerful video message on that site to hear more details of their vital work.

We are so blessed to receive all these happy pictures of thriving children—please keep them and their families in your prayers. If anyone wishes to commit to supporting *Stand by Me* each month (suggested donation is £1, but any amount would be gratefully received), please come and find Helen or Grace in 'Footsteps', or catch us when we are circulating after the service at coffee with our trusty red tin and clipboard!

Thank you so much for your continuing support.

Helen Bailey, on behalf of 'Footsteps'



Pau

Advance Notice—Save the Date!

WESSEX SYNOD'S 'BIG DAY IN'

Saturday, 6th September, 10 am—4 pm

at High Cross, Camberley

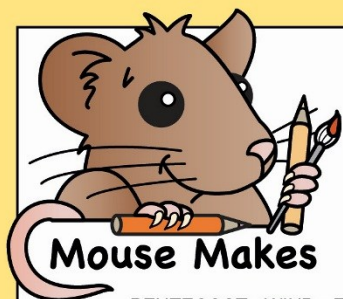
Resourcing Churches

Workshops & Stands ~ Guest Speaker

Guest Choir ~ Refreshments & Cooked Lunch

Something for everyone!





Mouse Makes

PENTECOST • WIND • FIRE
 HOLY • SPIRIT • TONGUES • RESTED
 JERUSALEM • JEWS • GALILEANS
 HEAR • LANGUAGE • ARAMAIC • GREEK
 HEBREW • PARTHIANS • MEDES
 ELAMITES • MESOPOTAMIA
 JUDEA • CAPPADOCIA • PONTUS
 ASIA • PHRYGIA • PAMPHYLIA
 EGYPT • LIBYA • CYRENE
 ROME • CRETANS
 ARABIANS • GOD



READ
 Acts
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It was fifty days since **Passover**, and Jews from many countries had come to **Jerusalem** to celebrate Passover. As the **Apostles** were gathered together the **Holy Spirit** came upon them and they began to speak in other **languages** as the Spirit enabled them.

The crowd that were listening were amazed as they heard about God in their own language.

How many people heard, believed and were baptised that day?

DID YOU KNOW?

The Bible or parts of the Bible have now been translated into over 3,000 different languages since it was first written in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek.